CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SURVEY SERIES

HISTORIC LANDMARKS, MONUMENTS AND STATE PARKS

Edited by Clark Wing

ANGELS CAMP - CALAVERAS COUNTY

Registered Landmark #287

by

Andrew Eggum

Written under auspices
of Work Projects Administration
Official Project #665-08-3-147

Sponsored by State of California, Department of Natural Resources

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Approximately thirty-five miles east and slightly north of Stockton, California, is located Angels, the first gold camp established in the north drainage belt of the Stanislaus River. This village, although retaining many of the old buildings erected in the fifties, is no sad and abandoned ghost town. It still supports its people, at least partially, from the mining of gold found in the auriferous gravels and quartz rock of the great Mother Lode. Its one thousand inhabitants, proud of their physically virile ancestors who panned the gravels and tunnelled the hills, perpetuate the traditions of fortitude, courage and good humor shown by their lusty forebears. A plaque designating Angels as a landmark, adds little to commemorate its history.

The inhabitants themselves have done that very well. Old landmarks and relics are preserved, repaired and well guarded. One day each year they celebrate a Jumping Frog Jubilee, a festival not to honor the "god of mammon" (gold) but to keep alive the diversions and humor practiced by the early miners in search of relaxation from herculean labor. The finest modern structure in town is the splendid Bret Harte Union High School building. The school's football team call themselves "The Jumping Frogs of Bret Harte High." The proud citizens of Angels, who thereby honor both Harte

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and Mark Twain, realize that stories and poems recording the sagas of the fun and frolic of earlier days have given Angels Camp wider fame than has the gold from its diggings.[1]

The town of Angels is located on sloping hills on either side of a little stream called Angels Creek which flows southwest and empties into the Stanislaus River. It lies about eight miles above the Stanislaus in the County of Calaveras, so named by the early California explorer Alferez Morago. He, too, found many skulls in the area. For that reason he named the region Calaveras, which in Spanish means heaps of skulls. Angels Creek wends its crooked way from above Murphys through rolling hills, sparsely covered with scrub pine and oak, until it reaches the Stanislaus canyon, which is walled by precipitous banks and almost clifflike mountains. The old, but still very much alive, camp lies in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas. These mountains, just a few miles east, rise rapidly to form the high and majestic range. Just a mile north is Altaville, first known as Cherokee Flat and for a time as Forks-of-the-Road. Within a radius of four miles there were once six or seven booming camps, some of which were more populous than Angels but which now live largely in the pages of history.

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A description of the location of Angels, made back in the fifties, perhaps cannot be improved upon. It shows a pride in the town and a prophetic vision. A young geography pupil, John B. Reddick, who later became lieutenant-governor of California, in an essay entitled "Geography of Angels Camp" wrote:[2]

> This place is a large portion of the known world, and is situated in Calaveras County, California. It is bounded on the north by Forks-of-the-Road and Winter's quartz mill, on the east by Shanghai City, and a bunch of firecrackers, on the south by the lower end of town and Coddington's house, on the west by a quartz camp and a big hill.

The future office-holder little suspected what it was that would make Angels known to the world. Not gold, but a croaking frog filled with shot and a skull of uncertain origin made the camp and its pioneers famous.

To miners, geologists and students of the California Gold Rush, the Mother Lode plays an important part in the scene. It is an area which still provides the location for many of the state's quartz mines. This gold-bearing belt extends, as a narrow strip, over the counties of Eldorado, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne and two-thirds across Mariposa. On the non-geological map it may be located by taking, as a

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starting point, the region a few miles east of Auburn, then extending the region southeasterly through Placerville, Jackson, San Andreas, Angels, Sonora and the village of Mariposa. C. A. Logan defines the Mother Lode as: "a belt of country from a few hundred feet to two miles wide on the western slope of Sierra Nevada, one hundred and twenty miles in length." Geologically he defines it as follows:[3]

> The distinguishing characteristics are a uniform dip east or northeast ... at a steep angle, 50° to 80° and associated with certain rocks of slaty or schistose, particularly Mariposa Clay Slate (Jurassic), altered audesite (in part Jurassic) and altered peridoite and surpentine all of which have been subjected to great compressive stresses or hydrothermal alteration along distinct over-thrust fault zone which has given access to mineralizing solutions of the great batholithic invasion of the upper crust when the Sierra Nevada were formed in cretaceous time.

The Lode "carries two or three practically parallel veins with subordinate spurs," but which are not traceable for any great length. The Mother Lode passes just east of Angels and crosses the creek one mile north of the camp.

The auriferous gravels lie adjacent to, but not in the camp proper. These deposits are the sands and water-polished gravels forming the beds of the ancient rivers,

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which flowed from Nevada to the Pacific Ocean long before the Sierra Nevadas reached their commanding height and venerable age. As the word "auriferous" indicates, these are gold-bearing ores. This gravel laid down in the Tertiary Period, was early discovered to be rich with the precious metal. In some places erosion and stream excavation exposed these old river beds; at other places they lie deep under deposits laid down by succeeding geological periods.[4] Immediately at the west of Angels is a third forration, also gold-bearing.[5] W. B. Tucker describes this formation as: "Amphibolite shists ... belonging to the Calaveras formation" which are cut through by "stringer leads consisting of numerous stringers and veins cutting through the amphibolite shists."[6] Lindgren describes this deposit as: "Slates and other sedimentary rocks and associated with Paleozoic and Mesozoic igneous rocks; it also contains smaller areas of grandiorite." The first gold hunters who came to the stream were not versed in mineral geology and luckily for them, they found the yellow metal loose in gravels and sands of the creek, carried there by the melted snows from deposits

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The tourist with limited time, wishing to visit the famous camp by direct route from Stockton, drives east through Farmington, Copperopolis to Altaville where he turns south one mile to Angels; or from Manteca he may drive east through Oakdale, past Knights Ferry, up through the gradually rising foothills to old Jimtown (now Jamestown) and Sonora, then turn north and cross the Stanislaus River at Melones, past Carson Hill to Angels Camp. However, to those who have the leisure, a better trip would be to drive to Placerville, journey south through Drytown, over Sutter Creek, visiting Jackson, San Andreas and down to Angels. If the tourist continues to Sonoma and Mariposa, the full length of the Mother Lode will have been traversed, giving an unforgettable picture of early gold camps, the scenes of California's most glamorous and in some respects, most adventurous epoch.

Very little appears to be known about the original Indians living on or near Angels Creek. Dr. Kroeber classifies them as Central Miwok and, except for generally defining their territory, he lets it go at that.[7] Bancroft says that Chief Estanisloo and José Jesús who succeeded him were both Wallas Indians whose head village was near Knights Ferry.[8]

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It is doubtful that the Wallas' land included Angels. Mrs. Buckbee speaks of a rancheria (village) which existed in the early days between Hanselman's and Los Muertos, a short distance east and south of Angels Camp. The rancheria was named Si-yak-um-ma.[9] Yet California Indians play a leading part in the discovery and early mining of gold on and near the Stanislaus River. José Jesús, Chieftain of the Wallas at Knights Ferry, had at one time been a Mission San Jose Indian whom, Bancroft says, had shown such executive ability that the padre appointed him Alcalde (Mayor) of the mission establishment.[10] Regardless of this honor, for some reason he became an implacable enemy of the mission fathers and the Spanish Americans. He fled to the Wallas and finally became a powerful chief of the tribe. At the time of the United States conquest he offered to raise a war party to assist in the conquest. Captain Charles Weber, who had received (indirectly) a grant of land embracing what is now Stockton, won the confidence of José and persuaded him to send twenty-five Indians to his mining camp at Webers Creek to dig gold and to learn how to prospect for the precious metal. After proper training, these Indians were brought back and then sent to search the Stanislaus River. They

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Again it was an "old Indian"[11] who guided Carson, Henry Angels and party in August 1848, from the Northern Mines to Angels and Carson Creek. The Murphy brothers, who later established a camp by that name, farther up on Angels Creek, employed numerous Indians to dig gold for them, with whom they got along famously. This can be partially explained by the fact that one of the brothers "married" an Indian chief's daughter.[12] Besides Captain Weber and the Murphy brothers, many of the Latin Americans brought their ranch Indians to the "diggins" to do the pick and shovel work. Perhaps only a part of the Indians who mined were local Angels Indians.

Except for occasional thefts, there does not appear to have been any serious trouble between the red and white men. Since the Indians had no notion of the commercial value of gold, the white men cheated them outrageously. The first year, 1848, of the gold discovery has been described as a period devoid of theft and robbery; a time of mutual aid, confidence and universal honesty, except towards the lowly and peaceable native. He was rarely paid in coin and if so at the rate of fifty cents to one dollar an ounce. The Indian brought

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in his gold and swapped it to individuals or trading companies. These traders, who had not only set an unconscionably low price for the Indian, also used especially heavy lead weights which were supposed to represent ounces, when weighing the native's metal. After the above two swindles had been perpetrated upon them, the merchant paid them in "worn blankets" at "their weight in gold" or calico cloth at twenty dollars a yard! Red handkerchiefs brought two ounces of gold.[13] Carson, in speaking of the fall of '48, says there was honesty and generosity in the transactions between the "Christians."[14] On the other hand, he accused the "Christians" of throwing the lead into the Indians by means of false prices and scale-weights. When the rush reached its height, the Indian, unless he labored as an employee of a white man, was elbowed out or left to work only those areas considered worthless. The tragic fate of all North American Indians overtook those of Angels Camp, but in a slightly less brutal manner than in many other parts of the state.

It is quite certain gold would not have been discovered on Angels Creek as early as August 1848, without the initiative of the commercially inclined Captain Weber. The

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The leader of the party which first established camps at Angels, Carson Creek and Murphys was James H. Carson, who had been a sergeant in Colonel Stevenson's regiment of

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New York Mexican War Volunteers. He and many others had received their discharges at Monterey. Carson was not enthusiastic over the first reports of Marshall's discovery of gold. The excitement the sight of the concrete gold created in the stirred imaginations of men often led to a sort of madness which recognized no obstacle as too great to be overcome. This generally resulted in such hurried stampedes, that men arrived at the diggings without adequate tools or sufficient food and clothing. Carson says that one day he saw a stranger, ragged, dirty, with long hair, stagger into Monterey. Carson at first failed to recognize this emaciated tramp as his friend "Billy," who was returning from the "Dry Diggings" (Placerville) with a bag of gold on his back.[16]

> I could not believe it. The bag was soon opened and out the metal tumbled; not in dust or scales, but in pieces ranging in size from that of a pea to hens eggs; and says he [Billy] 'this is only what I picked up with a knife.' There was before me proof positive that I had held too long to the wrong side of the question. I looked on for a moment, a frenzy seizing my soul. Unbidden my legs performed some entirely new movements of polka steps - I took several - houses were too small for me to stay in; I was soon in the street in search of necessary

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Within one hour he was mounted on an old mule and "armed with a wash-hand basin, fire shovel, a piece of square iron pointed at one end, a blanket, a rifle, a few yards of jerked beef, and a bag of penola"[17] and going at pressure mule speed for "the diggings."

Carson went to the Northern Mines where, at Weber's Creek, he was informed of the gold discovery on the Stanislaus. With a large party, among whom were Henry Angel (or Angels) Edward[18] and John Murphy and Dr. Isabell, the last three members of Weber's Stockton Mining Company, Carson struck south until the party reached Angels Creek where they camped one night. The next morning most of the party moved on. Henry Angel and the Murphy brothers stayed on the creek. Carson and the rest of the party went over the hill to Carson Creek (later named so in honor of Carson) where they found so much "color" that they proceeded to successfully gather the riches,

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which glistened in the sand.

Henry Angel, a discharged soldier and gambler, refused to go any farther. He stayed and mined at a spot on the stream which later acquired his name. Soon many others came to gather gold. "Gather" is the right word, because at first none were skilled with the miner's pan and few possessed one. A pocket, butcher or bowie knife were the first and most generally used tools with which to dig and scrape out the gold of Angels Creek. When scores of miners followed the news of the gold discovery, Henry Angel started a trading post to sell liquors and supplies to those who scraped, dug and panned the gold.[19]

That first year the men, who first worked Angels Creek in the fall of 1848, were discharged soldiers, a few sailors who had deserted their ships, United States citizens who were already in California, native Indians and quite a number of Spanish Americans of California extraction. These came without adequate tools, with little knowledge of mining and with only those supplies they could carry on horse or mule-back. Very few had tents. The only thing the men could provide were rude brush shelters placed up on the sloping hill above the creek, which was low during that time of the

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19. Buckbee, Pioneer days of Angels Camp, 8.

year. They worked almost hip deep in the water without long boots. Their clothes wore out and became rags unable to hide their nakedness.

Almost everybody found gold that first year. They were seized with such an acquisitive frenzy that, even when traders were unable to bring in sufficient food, the men could not tear themselves away from the stream to hunt the hills for game. The traders, Weber, Murphy, Angel and others, brought in a limited amount of goods by pack animals from French Camp. They traveled over land which did not even have a trail. Goods were high priced and gold was cheap. Before the gold strike a horse was worth $20, a steer $6. At Angels in '48 they rose as high as $400 and $200, respectively. A bowie knife brought $40; a pick or shovel $10. Beans were worth one dollar per pound. As for "flour and vegetables, 'We didn't had any.'" Against these and corresponding prices, the gold diggers turned in their gold at four, six and on occasion, eight dollars an ounce, causing Carson to write that the traders absorbed all the miners made, "but the traders amassed a fortune." He slightly exaggerates in this statement because a little farther on in his book he says that two-thirds of the miners left the camps with the approach of winter and went to San Francisco or Monterey,[20] where they spent or lost most of their gold before spring.

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20. Carson, Life in California, 15.

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20. Carson, Life in California, 18.

Exposure, incomplete diet and exhausting labor caused general emaciation and much sickness. Yet all who mined or visited in Angels Camp that year, speak of the honesty, generosity and sense of mutual fellowship existing in the diggings. No miner found it necessary to hide or especially protect his gold. There were no thieves or robbers to filch from the others' wealth. If even a stranger were temporarily broke or had hard luck, he was given a stake or loan by some one more fortunate. The Creek was free to all comers. The only title recognized was a use title to the claims. When a gold seeker left his "working" for over three days, it was permissible for another to take over. Almost all found gold. It seemed to be inexhaustible. The professional gambler, slicker, thief, bandit and claim jumpers did not arrive until 1849 and later.

Immediately after the heavy rains had ceased, in the spring of '49, the rush to the Southern Mines commenced. Angels received its full share. The surface scratching, done in '48, had scarcely disturbed the gravel banks. Like an avalanche, in '49, a horde of frenzied gold-hungry men descended upon Angels Creek. They profaned its verdure-covered banks and despoiled both the canyon and hills, cutting trees for shelter and fuel. The voices of birds and streams were drowned by loud cursing and laughter and by the sharp clang of steel against rock. The first 300 who came soon increased to 600.

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After a trip to the Mariposa country in the spring of

'49, Carson returned to Angels and, as he topped the hill overlooking the camp, he described what he saw:[21] "We had to stand and gaze on the scene before us - the hillsides were dotted with tents, and the creeks filled with human beings to such a degree that it seemed as if a days work of the mass would not leave a stone unturned in them."[22] At times the toilsome pick and shovel work went ahead at a normal pace, with time taken by the men to call out to each other, to joke and relay the latest news of the camp or rumors of newer and richer placers. Then the chatter would be disturbed by a joyous shriek from the lucky finder of a large nugget or rich pay-dirt. At this all conversation ceased; silence prevailed except for the noise of pick and bar applied with insane violence, until exhaustion forced a slackening of the pace.

The gold hunters of the second year were a little better equipped. The supplies were more plentiful although still inordinately high priced. A few experienced miners taught efficient methods. All learned how to use the pan; the rocker or cradle came into use and even a few long toms, to be followed still later by the long trough or sluice. More of the miners had tents, or they took time to construct rude

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21. Carson, Life in California, 17.
22. Ibid.

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dugouts on the side hills, roofed with hides or canvas. Merchants, whiskey peddlers, monte dealers, faro men, camp women and gold buyers erected tents or temporary brush shelters from which they loudly asked for patronage. No one at Angels in '49, had any feeling of permanence or intention of making Angels Camp, home. All were engaged in a mad scramble to get-rich-quick, after which they wanted to return to Monterey, to San Francisco, to the old rancho, Arkansas, Maine or Australia, or to wherever they still called home.

Late that summer healthy and ambitious companies of young men came overland or by sea around the Horn or over the Isthmus of Panama, bound for the gold fields of California. Of these Angels received its due proportion. Many came because they had friends who had mined and found gold the previous fall. They sang a variation of the famous old song, "Oh! Susannah."[23]

> Oh, Calaveras! That's the land for me!
> I'm bound for Angel's Campo
> With my gold pan on my knee.
> I'll scrape the diggings clean, my boys,
> I'll drain the old creek dry,
> A pocketful of gold bring home
> So brothers, don't you cry.

Others came too. The riff-raff from the streets of eastern cities, fleeing criminals, gamblers, fading demimonde,

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Sydney Ducks (penal colonists from Australia) and a lot of plain toughs and bad men. Many were not criminal, but poorly equipped for hard labor and privation; lawyers, doctors, preachers, counterjumpers and dudes with gold rings on their soft white hands. They perhaps thought the gold lay ready to be picked from the top of the ground or hoped their station and intellectual attainments would be demanded at a high rate of compensation. Parsons perhaps more nearly than any other writer, conveyed a sense of the confused and heterogeneous condition of mining camp society in the placer fields of California, when he wrote:[24]

> Take a sprinkling of sober-eyed, earnest, shrewd, energetic New England businessmen; mingle with them a number of rollicking sailors, a dark band of Australian convicts and cutthroats, a dash of Mexican and frontier desperadoes, a group of hardy backwoodsmen, some professional gamblers, whiskey-dealers, general swindlers, or rural agriculturalists ... and having thrown in a promiscuous crowd of broken-down merchants, disappointed lovers, blacksheep, unfledged dry-goods clerks, professional miners from all parts of the world; Adullamites generally, stir up the mixture; season strongly with gold-fever, bad liquor, faro, monte, rouge et noir, quarrels, oaths, pistols, knives, dancing, and digging, and you have something approximating to California society in early days.

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24. C. H. Shinn, Mining camps, 156. (Quoted from C. F. Parsons, Life of John Marshall.)

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24. O. H. Shinn, Mining camps, 1885. (Quoted from G. F. Parsons, Life of John Marshall.)

Yet Carson says not over one-fourth of the miners gambled. True, homesickness and failure made many sober-eyed young men the victims of liquor to such an extent that death or oblivion overtook them. To others the diversions of camp life were taken in stride. These won and kept their gold, went home or continued their success in California in other fields. Many first struck "color" in Angels Camp.

By 1849, the amateur gold miner had discovered the need of boots when working knee-deep in the cold mountain water. He was forced to throw away his suspenders, and to belt his pants for pick and shovel work. Flannel shirts of varied hue, preferably red, were most commonly worn. The bright colors, favored by the Mexican-Californians became popular, as evidenced by the large gay handkerchief worn around the neck and draped over one shoulder. A bowie knife and a pistol, suspended from the belt perhaps in sheath and holster, were considered not only as necessary armament but also articles of dress. Barbers and razors were scarce, consequently the miner emulated the hardy Rocky Mountain trapper and permitted his hair and whiskers to grow in wild profusion. The long hair often fell unconfined to the shoulders. Some "coiled it up like a twist of tobacco" or "divided it into three tails hanging down to the waist."[25] Everybody

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25. Roberta Evelyn Holmes, The Southern mines of California, 54-55.

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wore a wide hat of the sombrero type, adorned to suit his own artistic fancies or to meet the limitations of the local ornament market. Failing to procure the Spanish ornaments for their hats, some adopted the backwoodsman style and suspended a squirrel or coon tail from the hat band. Still others aped the Indians and adorned their headgear with flowers. Flashy colors, bizzare arrangement and the fantastic was resorted to in dress without the slightest touch of vanity. It was all worn with a full sense of its utterly ludicrous effect. The professional gambler and the lawyer, when practicing their calling, were permitted to wear stovepipe hats, frock coats and colored waistcoats, the minister his clerical garments, without being ridiculed as Eastern dudes and dandies, but if they deserted their calling to wield the pick, no superior air and clothes were permitted by the miners.

The first two or three years, while Angels was still a camp and before anyone thought of the place as becoming a permanent town, buildings were temporary shelters. Cabins, stores, saloons and palaces of pleasure were large tents, often without board floors, sometimes merely brush-roofed shades. A box or a barrel became counter or bar. Naturally amusement and relaxation was limited to drinking, gambling and dancing on turf or bare ground. A remnant of piety survived in the diggings. No pick and shovel work was done on

Sundays. It was customary and permissible to prospect for new gold locations, build and repair the cabins, wash and mend the toilworn clothes. By common consent all forms of diversions were permitted on the Sabbath; bull and bear baiting, gambling and imbibing, prize fights, horse-racing, and dancing were the usual Sunday programs. After the long sluice boxes were built and used, the miners shoveled gravel into the running water and only cleaned them out and gathered the gold caught in the riffles of the trough once a week - on Sunday. Evidently the task of gathering the profit and reward of their week's toil was a pious Sabbath task.

Very few women, except the "camp sports," arrived before late '49 in the diggings. Consequently at the dances men were compelled to pair with men. Naturally the problem arose, how to determine who should lead and who follow. Practically everyone's clothes were ragged and patched. With ribald humor, it became the universal custom, at the Angels Camp dances, for the poor unfortunates who had patches on the seats of their pants to have to be "ladies."[26] The unfortunate "ladies" with the patches were chagrined and uncomfortable victims of this joke until some quick-witted "lady" at the end of the dance called out, "Promenade to the bar and treat

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your partners." There the bewhiskered, pipe-smoking "females" downed their slugs of whiskey with boisterous glee at the partners' expense. The tables were turned. The miners vied with each other in colorful efforts to dress in such a manner as to conform to the pattern which would cause them to be selected "ladies." White flour sacking, orange and red muslin or flannel was sewed on the unmentionable portion of the pants, with which they sallied forth to the dance where free drinks were obligatory to the "fair sex." The camp was still a rollicking, boisterous aggregation of men, generous and tolerant to a degree which would have shocked the respectable communities.

The gold seemed inexhaustible. Live and let live, until we get rich and leave for home where we will have to resort to a more staid life, seemed to be the prevailing attitude. There was much gambling of all kinds and considerable "spreeing," indulged in as a sort of release. That stern, often savage, reprisal against non-American and criminals came later. It is true these hard-working, hard-drinking miners full of the lust for life, were jovially almost vulgar, but never consciously lewd. The restraint of established society was lacking, consequently the young men whose success depended on grit and brawn, were almost profanely intolerant of men and social institutions which seemed incongruous in the mines.

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When Colonel Mason was appointed Governor of California, he had no statutes or law ready-made to lay down for the new territory. He therefore issued a proclamation which stated that Mexican law prevailed until such time as it would be superseded by legislative action. The robust, miners, coming from the states, knew nothing about Mexican law and were openly contemptuous of it. Had not the United States just whipped Mexico? They would have nothing to do with "greaser law." These pioneers, strong individualists, more militantly democratic than Jackson's backwoodsmen, came to a new country, under new conditions and fiercely insisted on establishing equality of individual opportunity by town meeting methods.

In the mines, title to land was not recognized, only its use and occupation was respected. If a dispute arose or a camp regulation was found necessary and urgent, at once the men of the case were called together, a chairman and other necessary temporary officers elected by acclamation. After free discussion, a majority conclusion was final and binding from which there was no appeal. Such regulations, except those having general application, set no precedent; each case was a separate and distinct problem to be heard and decided by the whole camp. Mining claims, by general consent, were limited to six feet square. If the use-owner

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failed to work it for three consecutive days, (barring illness or an equally valid excuse) it became the use-property of the first man who took over. To the sick and the unlucky great generosity was shown. To the lazy and to the "slickers," none at all. "The unwritten, unformulated law, that ruled each camp, was the instinct of healthy humanity to mete out equal justice to all.... The bonds of fellowship were strong and sincere."[27]

They recognized no class, only worth. Why should they? Here at Angels, a common farm hand, often through the exercise of bravery and brawn, mixed with a little luck, struck it rich, while former judges or aristocrats from the east were compelled to beg for the loan of a few ounces. They hated lawyers, professionally, whom they accused of being cheaters and double-tongued artists at confusing the common man with legal phraseology. As one old-timer said, "We needed no law until the lawyers came."[28] The camp, by democratic methods, provided its own rules and meted out justice as befitted the occasion. The only concession made to Mexican-California law and institutions was the election of an alcalde[29] (similar to mayor) in Angels. This official was authorized to

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27. Shinn, Mining camps, 117-118.
28. Ibid., 120.
29. Buckbee, Pioneer days of Angels Camp, 4.

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call meetings as the need arose, arbitrate trivial differences and enforce generally accepted camp rules. Until about 1852, he was accepted as Alcalde over all camps in close proximity to Angels; Arroyo de los Muertos,[30] (canyon of the dead) Cherokee Flat, Hanselman's Hill, Albany Flat and others.

To repeat, the gold miners still believed there was an inexhaustible supply of gold, if not in Angels, in California. They felt no need to assert property and monopoly rights or to be selfish and to refuse the new gold-seekers a chance, whatever their race or nationality. In '49 not many professional criminals had arrived, nor had adversity and desperation sufficient time to create such a class. Petty thieves and other undesirable individuals were expelled from camp after an open trial, or at worst tied to a tree and given the number of lashes prescribed by a vote of the whole assembly, then driven from camp with a warning not to return. There had not yet arisen the need for that sternness which often resulted in an almost sadistic brutality, not alone towards the criminal element, but towards those the Anglo-Saxon American chose to consider within the "foreigner" class. In this class they chose to place, not only the Chinese, Mexicans and men without citizenship, but also the Spanish-Californians.

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30. Sometimes referred to as Campo de los Muertos.

But this was after the desperate gold-seekers were not so sure of gaining riches and after every possible gold prospect in the state was being worked. Then men lost their feeling of generous fellowship and commenced to assert ownership of claim "rights" and to fiercely exclude all who might threaten to divide what they realized was not sufficient to go around. The instinct of individual ownership reasserted itself. "Foreigners," "inferior races," and others were proclaimed as interlopers. Drive them out, or let them work for wages, without the right of property title.

The fall of '49 and the spring of '50 saw the beginning of an increased stream of people California bound. The great majority were men, honest and industrious. Adventurers, procurers, gamblers and cutthroats arrived, and intended in one manner or other, to procure as much as possible of the gold dug by others. Experienced miners from Sonoma, Mexico, Chili, South America; hard-working coolies from China; French, German and British; fleeing criminals, bankrupt businessmen all flocked to the diggings. Confusion, competition, desperation, crime and distrust resulted. However the first result was a great increase of population not alone in Angels, but in all the gold regions.

To be sure, crime increased, but the growing population had to have the necessities of life and the products of agriculture and industry. New camps, clamoring for goods, and

merchants anxious to sell at the still fantastically high prices, called for transportation. The supplies came by water to Stockton. The enterprising Captain Weber first consent his goods by sail but soon he acquired river steamboats. From Stockton pack-mule trains crossed the level San Joaquin Valley to Knight's Ferry, east along the south bank of the Stanislaus River until they arrived directly south of Angels, where they were again compelled to cross to the north bank. Here a ferry (called Slumgullion by Bret Harte) was established by Mr. Robinson near what is now Melones. This ferry for a time earned $5,000 a month. The pack trains, generally owned by Americans, traveled in caravans of a hundred animals or more, divided into strings of forty or fifty. Each string was divided into units of ten in charge of an experienced Mexican packer. Each mule or horse carried a load of from 200 to 240 pounds. Later the crude pack trail was made into a passable wagon road. Freight from Stockton to Angels Camp coast thirty to fifty cents per pound. Freighters and passenger carriers made as high as $3,000 a month and consequently had no time to hunt game for fresh meat. Their diet was limited to jerked beef, salt pork "Oh, so salt,"[31] beans and flapjacks. On the road passengers were charged three dollars a meal for this menu, and if the traveler purchased a

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After the roads were made passable, stages were established. The first passenger service from Stockton to Angels was provided by a man named Holden, in 1850.[33] He was followed by Fisher and Company, Ready and Company and Brown and Company; C. Green and Company a little later, furnished regular stage service from Sonora through Angels with its northern terminal at Sacramento. Finally all the major companies were merged into the California State Company with headquarters at Sacramento. At first the stages were common freight wagons and later came the famous Concord coaches. A slightly different and "lower to the ground" vehicle called the "mud-wagon" was used where the mountain roads were bad. It was not so heavy, but was swung with "through braces."[34]

The skillful drivers of these coaches, often drawn by half wild mustangs, have become heroes of prose and poetry. "He was a lord in his way," says Bancroft, even though "often

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profane, he was usually gentlemanly and accommodating to his passengers.... They were "... levelers of distinction, and the judge or governor on the box beside the driver, is his equal, if not indeed his inferior."[35] These drivers often called, in English fashion, the "Whip" were generally swaggering young fellows, who often, in company with the shotgun guards who rode beside them on the box, met courageously the conditions of weather and the dangers of banditry. They had a sense of the dramatic and always left and entered a station on the dead run. They enjoyed frightening a timid passenger, but were sufficiently skilled and careful not to endanger life and limb.

Express companies, which insured and delivered gold to the mints and also acted as postal and parcel carriers, sprang up in every region. The first to operate in the Southern Mines and to serve Angels were Todd and Company, closely followed by William T. Ballou's Express and Mourison's Express. Adams and Company, with large eastern investments, became very prominent until the firm went under in 1855. After that the Wells Fargo Express took over the greater portion of California express business. Their agent at Angels, Mr. Scribner, became a famous character, and a well remembered pioneer of the camp.

During the period beginning with the fall of '49 and

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35. Bancroft, California inter pocula, 328.

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lasting until 1855, every stream-bed, gravel bank and old auriferous gravel deposit that lay exposed or close to the surface in and around Angels, was dug up and turned over again and again. The husky, hard-drinking, loud-swearing men, whom stories often depicted as mere hell-roaring crowd spending all its time roistering, performed prodigious labors. Not even the kindly vegetation of trees, bush, vine and grass of the succeeding eighty years, has been able to entirely hide the heaped-up rubble, trenches and pits left in every canyon and hillside. They still remain a monument to the toiling, sweating gold diggers of Angels. Reverend Taylor wrote in 1857 of the California miners:[36] "They have done more hard work ... within the last eight years, that has ever been done ... in the same length of time.... I may safely say double the amount ever performed by the same number of men since the world was made."

Chinese brought to the camp as cheap laborers, soon became independent miners.[37] Mexicans, Chileans, Sydney Ducks and representatives of almost all nations crowded Angels Creek and every neighboring dry gulch. There was not room for all who wished to mine. Parasites, slickers and thieves, each in

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The camp was more populous now. In 1854 it was estimated that Angels contained 4,500 people. Consequently the assembly of the camp as a whole, no longer acted as judge and jury. The assembled miners, while the accused was safely tied to a tree, or locked in a well-guarded room, elected a temporary judge, jury (generally only six men), prosecutor and a representative for the defense. Then those who chose could stay to listen to the proceedings. If the decision of the jury did not please the crowd, a vote could change it. However, there was no appeal to a higher tribunal and when the jury and the crowd gave their judgment, the convicted felon or victim was given only a few hours to settle his affairs before he was taken to Dead Horse Hill. There, as many as possible took hold of the rope which dragged the unfortunate

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into the air. This mass executioning was done as a protection against the danger of the formal law charging the executioners with the crime of lynching. They felt there was safety in numbers, when exercising popular justice.

Mrs. Buckbee describes an incident which illustrates the almost savage reaction to criminality during this period when the hard working element was sore beset by the toughs and killers.[38] A local Sunday school teacher was being buried and while the mourners slowly followed the funeral procession on its way up Main Street towards the Protestant cemetery, it was rudely disturbed by yells and screams of "Catch the murderer!" "Catch the murderer!" The pallbearers quickly set down the coffin, joined the chase and captured the murderer. A monte player, who felt himself victimized, had stabbed a monte-dealer (or banker, as the dealer was called) to death. After the assassin had been properly secured, the pallbearers and mourners continued their sad procession. When the funeral ceremonies were over, the mourners changed themselves into a democratic (town meeting) but stern tribunal of law. The murderer was soon convicted and "promptly marched ... to Dead Horse Hill and lynched."

Violence was a common occurrence during the early

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38. Buckbee, Pioneer days of Angels Camp, 10.

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Great gold discoveries at Morgan Hill, Carsons, Murphys and other localities temporarily created more populous places than Angels, but generally these boom camps did not take on the air of permanence. Angels Camp, while still in the frame construction period, built better and bigger structures than the surrounding camps. Merchant and resident seemed imbued, almost at the start, with the spirit of permanence. The Chinese, who had their section in the east end of town, sent to China for young ailanthus trees[40] which they called the

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"tree of heaven" and under whose cool shade they sat, contented residents of Angels, dreaming of far-away Cathay. The Indians gradually died or drifted away, not especially persecuted, but unable to survive under the new conditions. One "Old Gerome," a young Indian in '49, lived out his life, a friend and ward of the most prominent citizens of the town, who at his death gave him an Indian burial that would have satisfied the requirements due a great chief.[41] During the first frenzied years, long before the express companies provided safe service, Gerome carried the dust from Angels to Stockton for the pioneers. The honest old savage lies buried at Angels where he died on February 25, 1900 - aged 110.

Like all the early diggings, Angels had its share of scurvy, cholera, smallpox, fires and occasional floods. The year 1852 was especially bad. It was visited by its "second epidemic of smallpox" from which almost the entire population suffered. Bad weather and poor roads obstructed transportation. The camp was threatened with famine; all single men were asked to leave so that women and children could be fed the meager rations on hand. Several fires at different intervals destroyed frame business buildings; these were generally reconstructed of stone. In 1855 practically

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A few spectacular and lucky gold discoveries were made at Angels. The placer and gravel gold found in the Southern Mines, was deposited in larger flakes, nuggets and particles than in other parts of the state. In and surrounding Angels the precious metal was found in shape of beans, peas, melon seeds, irregular chunks and finally as stringers and other mixtures in the quartz rock. Time has obscured the hard labor and the tragedy of those who failed to find riches. Often the storyteller records only the glamorous tale of the lucky individuals. Angels Camp had its share of these too. Yet the history of Angels, the part which

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Bennager Rasberry, from whom Rasberry Lane in Angels is named, became hungry one day in 1852 or '53 and went hunting for fresh meat.[43] He got the ramrod stuck in the barrel of his gun. To free the rod he shot it out, hitting the root of a manzanita bush in which the rod became firmly imbedded. Rasberry made a mighty heave and out came the rod, carrying with it bush and evidence of fabulous wealth. To one of the roots clung a piece of quartz rock shining with gold. That same day he took out $700, the next day $2,000, and the third $7,000 in gold.

In 1852 the Winter brothers not by fortuitous accident, but by pick and shovel prospecting, uncovered a spot 200 feet square where they washed out, by means of a sluice or riffle-box, $9,000 in a few weeks.[44] Going down deeper,

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they later found ore which yielded as high as $200 a ton. A fortune was finally extracted from the area. Many lesser lucky finds of rich ore and large nuggets were made. As late as 1884, James Harris dug out a nugget, valued at $700, on Dead Horse Hill, not far from the hanging tree.

With the advent of responsible merchants, bankers and express service, the price of gold rose in the Camp. By fall 1849, it rose to twelve dollars an ounce and as the years followed, to fourteen and sixteen, and finally close to the Philadelphia mint price of $20.67. The year of the discovery at Angels there were no adequate means of weighing the metal. A thimbleful was counted four dollars, a tumbler-ful $1,000; "a pinch" the price of a drink, or one dollar. Bartenders underwent an examination to see how much they could extract out of a miner's poke before they were hired. Some were accused of getting their digits well moistened before extracting the dollar pinch.[45] Soon regulation scales, with honest weights (except those used for the lowly Indian) came into general use.[46] The professional camp gamblers were given credit for first paying commensurate prices for the dust. As the placer and gravel mining gradually became exhausted it became necessary to crush the gold-bearing

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45. Hittell, History of California, III, 121.
46. Carson, Life in California, 53.

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45. Hittell, History of California, III, 141.
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quartz rock. This required machines, tunnelling or digging deep shafts. Capital on a large scale became necessary. Roughly, 1855 closes the surface-mining period in Angels. The great days of acquiring riches by the means of pick and shovel, pan and brawn were almost over. It was a wild, turbulent, but heroic period, to quote Bancroft, "What was it? An exclamation point in the history of civilization ... was not so much an epic as an era."[47]

The citizens of Angels rooted themselves on the sloping hill and along the banks of the creek with brick and stone. They built school, church and theater long before the "honke-tonk" and "palaces of pleasure" ceased to dominate the scene. To compensate for having denuded the pleasant canyon and hillsides of the native trees, they planted shade trees, vines and flowers. Angels was on the road to become respectable, but not too much so. It retained and still does, the vigorous independence and the spirit of pioneer humor. Who were a few of those who first took root in Angels?[48]

The more notorious early bandits, whom the fictionists and the lapse of time have more or less clothed with an aurora of Robin Hoodism, did not made Angels their headquarters nor stage any major raids in the town. Joaquin Murrieta[49]

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47. Bancroft, California inter pocula, 315.
48. Buckbee, Early pioneers of Angels Camp.
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As soon as the gold prospectors flooded Angels Creek in sufficient numbers to justify a trading post, Henry Angel built a crude log hut and started a miners' supply store. After that he fades out of the picture, at least to such an extent that the chroniclers fail to mention him. Evidently Henry Angel's only permanent contribution to Angels was his discovery of gold, and his name to the creek and town on which it stands. Carson, the leader of the exploring party to the Stanislaus River region, left Angels, crossed the divide and mined successfully on Carson Creek for a few weeks. The following five years he alternately mined and explored what is now divided into three counties, Calaveras, Tuolumne and Mariposa. He gathered little wealth; he dug no gold and left no material reminder in Angels. But at his death, in 1853, he left a short pamphlet, often referred to in this monograph. This is a treasure-house of information regarding the hectic years in California, 1848-1853.[50]

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50. Carson, *Life in California*.

One of the '49ers, Dr. William A. Kelley, was perhaps one of the best loved of the early settlers and some believed the owner of the famous Calaveras Skull (stolen from his office) which hoaxed the scientific world. Dr. Kelley mined for two years, then his professional services came into such demand, that he ceased mining to practice medicine. His services were never dependent upon the ability of his patients to pay. It is said he never mailed statements nor rendered personal bills. When desperate for cash, he paid for space in the local weekly paper in which he frankly stated his predicament asking "all persons knowing themselves indebted" to him to pay "at least a portion" of what they owed him. The story of Bennager Rasberry, who also came in '49, has been partially told. Mr. Brickwell, who in 1854 taught the first school in Angels rented space for his class in a Main Street building owned by Mr. Rasberry. Another '49er was George C. Tryon, a successful miner, who later became owner of the Angels Hotel, often called Tryon's Hotel. He was also county assessor and sheriff. C. C. Lake, in 1851, erected a huge tent at the corner of Main Street and Chinatown Road in which he rented sleeping space. He quickly replaced this by a one-story frame building which he called Angels Hotel. In 1855 it was replaced by a stone structure. A second story of the same material was added in 1857. He sold the building to Tryon in 1863 who retained possession

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until 1887. This is the hotel, made world famous by Mark Twain, where Ross Coon told the budding humorist the story of the Jumping-Frog. Here many famous travelers of the early days accepted lodgings in rooms which remain to this day much as they were when Ross Coon presided back of its bar. Hotel Calaveras, a landmark of the early days, is built upon the site where Thomas L. Lindsay, who arrived in 1850, constructed the Revere House in 1857.

The Irishman, Michael Cosgrave, came from Dublin to Angels in 1850. He owned successively a sawmill, livery stable, hotel and hall. Cosgrave Hall, later known as Armory Hall, was the scene of many assemblies and festivities. There the miners saw and heard theatrical performances by Lola Montez, La Petite Crabtree, Christopher Backus, known along the Mother Lode as "One-eyed Kit," and many others. George and Edward Stickle came to Stockton in 1849. In 1852 they established the famous mercantile firm of E. and G. Stickle at Angels. The brothers built a handsome theater outside the fire zone, on Circus Hill. Here, Mrs. J. B. Booth, and great Edwin Booth and others entertained the citizens of Angels Camp with their great dramatic ability, and it is said they were showered with gold nuggets thrown upon the stage. Only the foundation stones of this famous theater now remain. Perhaps the most beloved woman of the early days of this famous camp was Mrs. Olivia Rolleri, familiarly called "Grandma Rolleri." She purchased the

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Calaveras Hotel and operated it until she died thirty-nine years later. During that time no one was ever turned from her door hungry, whether he could pay or not.[51] "Grandma Rolleri" came from Italy, around the Horn. Despite her generosity she prospered, raised her family and left them a comfortable competence. Her granddaughters still run the old hostelry.

Of those who did not take root, but who got their start on the road to wealth and fame in Angeles Camp, two are of outstanding fame, John W. Mackay and James Graham Fair. Fair came to Angels with only a butcher knife and a tin pan.[52] With these crude tools, he extracted the first of his fabulous fortune, augmented in the Comstock Lode, Nevada, and later increased in San Francisco. James G. Fair, the long-legged Scotchman whom "nobody in those days believed would amount to much," came to Angels hoping to find wealth. There he met laughing, red-haired Theresa Rooney, a convent educated girl, who was "slinging hash."[53] He somehow procured ownership of the Utica Mine, which for many years failed to pay. He sold it for $30,000. With this money Fair went to Nevada where he formed a partnership with with Jack Flood and Bill O'Brien, saloon keepers of San Francisco, and later with John W. Mackay.[54] They both made fortunes. Fair

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51. Buckbee, Pioneer days of Angels Camp, 31.
52. Ibid., 37.
53. Louis J. Stellman, Mother Lode, 87-89.
54. Ibid.

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81. Buckbee, Pioneer days of Angels Camp, 21.
82. Ibid., 27.
83. Louis J. Stellman, Mother Lode, 87-89.
84. Ibid.

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Angels' first publicity man was Myron Hill, who in 1853 commenced to write news and information regarding Angels and the California diggings. His articles appeared in several publications including Harpers, Golden Era and the Evening Bulletin, the last two in San Francisco. There is no evidence that he ever mined. In 1879, he became the owner and editor of the weekly paper Mountain Echo, published in Angels.

The Sonora Mexicans, experienced miners, were perhaps the first to devise machinery in and around Angels to crush rock in order to extract the gold. They built rude machines or mills which they called arrastres.[55] The first were run by mules and later where possible, by water-wheel power. These first mills were slow, and no ore which did not assay more than twenty dollars a ton, could be profitably mined and milled. It is believed that the Mexicans quartz-mined as early as 1851. Soon the Americans followed suit and put up "flutter wheels" (water wheels). Among the first in Angels and California to utilize these methods were,

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Angels' full mining history, succeeding the placer periods, would fill a large volume. Some of the earliest mines, the Sultana located by Dr. J. J. Boon in 1852, and the Marshall Mine owned by the Winter brothers, yielded well as early as 1854. The following mines were within the camp boundaries: The Utica, George Washington, Stickles Mine, Rasberry, Confidence, Jackson. Partially within were the Lighter and Crystal. To the north and close by, were the Dead Hill, Borce, Matson, Gold Cliff, Suffolk, Angel, Excelsior and Eldorado. This list is by no means complete. Large scale mining and reducing mills demanded capital, technical services and hundreds of wage-earning miners. Angels Camp ceased to be merely a camp. It became a town. Holding on to its traditions and customs it took on some conventionality.

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houses and gambling houses still thrived. But schools were built in which the increasing numbers of children attended. Cottages, homes of settled families, dotted the hillsides where formerly the rude cabins of the bachelor miner provided temporary shelter. The church bells called the faithful to Sunday school. Devotional services were held each Sabbath in Roman Catholic and Protestant churches as early as 1854.[57] Those who remained in Angels Camp and those who came later were compelled to take up the normal community life, but they never forgot nor ceased to enjoy living over again, or listening to tales of the turbulent, glamorous years. The twilight of the heroic era was spent, as far as relaxation was concerned, in reënacting or in devising situations, jokes and hoaxes which fulfilled the traditions of Angels' days of '49. The camp's sense of humor never died.

Many towns and cities with glamorous pasts, bonanza camps during California's hectic early period, perpetuate the memory of the "Days of Gold." Many pageants, dramatizing the life of the Forty-niners, are given one day each year in memory of the Argonauts who came to wash gold in the canyons and stream-beds of California. Angels is

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justly proud of its mining history and properly seeks to save the old buildings, relics and traditions of the "diggings." It has a unique way of doing this. It cherishes and perpetuates the wild, free and boisterous American frontier humor brought to its apex in this early mining period of the state. This type of humor was first transcribed into literature by Artemus Ward. Ward was followed by Bill Nye, Mark Twain and Bret Harte. The Calaveras country and especially Angels Camp is fortunate in that both Mark Twain and Bret Harte spent much time in the Southern mines and either lived or visited at Angels Camp. Both have made the camp famous and unforgettable through their writing.

Just what was the nature, the essence of this humor? Perhaps no one at this late date, who did not live and feel the spirit of the times, can adequately portray nor properly define its spirit and form. It arose out of the need for diversion in a time and place devoid of press, literature, theater, church and balanced community social life. Its vehicular form and content took shape in response to definite compulsions and social and psychological needs. The long unlighted winter nights in the crude cabins and beside the trapper camp fire and slow toilsome wagon journeys were beguiled and made bearable by listening to well-told stories making light of toil, danger and privation.

Never did such large masses of men voluntarily migrate to a new country in an equally short span of years, as came to California after '49. These migrants suffered untold hardships whether they came by land or by sea. They came to an almost virgin land devoid of the agricultural and industrial facilities necessary to meet even elemental needs. The absence of roads and transport facilities added to the difficulties of bringing those few goods, which were available in the ports and settled communities far from the gold-bearing foothills, to the miners. Men, mad with the lust for quick wealth, rushed to the placer mines, ignorant of even rudimentary mining. They established camps without the essentials of proper shelter, cooking utensils and with only the barest necessities as food. The unaccustomed and intense labor, often performed hip-deep in water under a burning sun, demanded heroic fortitude. The inadequate diet brought on scurvy. The exposure to the elements and to contagion caused epidemics to sweep through the camps which were totally unequipped to care for the sick. The weaklings succumbed; the strong survived. Those who survived did so with a fortitude built up with the will to take it; making light of back-breaking toil, of disappointments; by making a joke of privation. Western humor, horseplay and boisterous pranks came to their rescue.

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depicted as wild exaggeration, sometimes vulgar, often irreverent, but never quite sacrilegious. It deflated pretensions which were not real and it upset superiority which was not earned under the conditions prevailing in the gold diggings. For that reason some have considered it unkind, yet a careful search fails to expose malice or an intent to produce hurt. It often built up the sublime, tore at the heartstrings and then with bombshell suddenness destroyed the illusion with a denouement characterized by the ludicrous. This sudden lift from the too sublime or pathetic caused such sudden and satisfying relief that huge enjoyment and invariable laughter resulted. Sometimes quick wit evidenced by the "proper answer" to a jibe or the sharp pointed short story was passed around.

In order to embellish the comfortless surroundings, to gloss over the torn and tattered clothes, to make more palatable the monotonous sameness of the daily diet, games of pretense were indulged in. The rough and worn garments were ignored and covered up by a neckerchief costing twenty-five dollars. The tent or brush shelter became "my mansion" or "the castle." The flapjacks and the salt pork took on names from the menu of some exclusive eastern or Parisian restaurant. Horseplay of jokes on the other fellow were constantly practiced. To cause mild discomfort, not too deep embarrassment and temporary inconvenience to a victim

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who might be the "pardner" of the perpetrator, was considered legitimate amusement and highly humorous.

The spirit of the camps was individualistic and extremely democratic. What a man had been back east or in another part of the world meant nothing in the diggings. What he accomplished in the mines, how well he stood up under the hardships and how tolerant and social his behavior, were what determined his rating, the measure of his approval in the camps.

A partial explanation of the bombast and tall story-telling can be explained by the constant bolstering necessary to retain morale, to prevent any weakening of the will and the ascendency of the inferiority complex. It was an age of individual prowess and a lot of bluffing added for good measure. Yet each individual understood his own and the other fellow's weaknesses. So when the pretensions grew too pronounced, the stories too tall, deflation was resorted to in order to puncture inflated egos and unjustified superiority. Humor was one of the democratic controls freely used to maintain social levels and accepted decorum. Genuine idiosyncrasies were respected. It was generally accepted that the gambler was permitted to dress as a big city dandy. The frocked parson was properly respected as long as he lived up to his calling, otherwise he became the victim of the jibes and jests due to hypocrisy. Individuals, camps, hills and creeks soon

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acquired names which characterized them best or recalled some humorous incident connected with the person or place. The best stories were told and retold. They traveled from camp to camp taking on length and sometimes new details. Mining humor, besides being pure diversion, perhaps kept the miners sane and more abstemious than otherwise. Total lack of the old social restraints, grueling hardships and the growing ache of homesickness would, without a good sense of humor, have crushed most of the gold seekers.

It is fortunate that two men of such original genius, as Bret Harte and Mark Twain lived for a short time in the California gold camps. These two men recorded and embellished the pioneer humor indulged in by the Forty-niners. Bret Harte came to Tuolumne County in 1860 and remained in the camps for more than two years. Mark Twain did not come until 1863 and stayed but four months. He, too came to Tuolumne County at Jackass Hill, just south of the Stanislaus River. Since the camps of Calaveras County, Angels, Carson Hill and others were closer to Jackass Hill than the important camp of Tuolumne County, Mark Twain's stories and notes dealt almost exclusively with Jackass Hill and Angels Camp. In January of 1864, he and Jim Gillis used Angels as a headquarters while they prospected in the surrounding hills and streams. Twain, too lazy to wrestle a pick and shovel, spent most of his time at the saloons and gaming houses,

playing poker and absorbing the tall stories told around the bars, by such experts as Ross Coon, the bartender of Angels Hotel.[58] The fabulous stories, drolly told, fascinated the future humorist. The crude lodgings and atrocious food served at Angels became the object of his pet peeve which was recorded in the terminology of the times and each article of food was given the prevailing appellation coined by the rowdy but good-natured guests of eating-houses and hotel.

In his diary he complains of the weather and the food.[59] He complains with mock pathos of the "cafe" (coffee) which he invariably calls "dish-water." Because funds were lacking, Twain could not frequently patronize Angels Hotel, which was not much better than the "French Restaurant" where he was compelled to eat. January 28, 1864 his notebook recorded the following: "Rain and wind ... chili-beans and dish-water three times today as usual and some kind of 'slum' which the Frenchman called 'hash.' Hash be damned!" On the 29th we read, "... but as J. /Jim Gillis/ says we won't stand the dish-water and beans any longer, by God." On January 30th they moved to the Angels Hotel where they got "coffee that a Christian may drink without jeopardizing his eternal soul."

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58. Coon is variously spoken of as Bill, Ben and Ross Coon.
59. Albert B. Paine, Mark Twain's notebook, 6-8.

On February 5, Jim and Mark who were then entertaining Dick Stoker, took Dick to the Frenchman's "in order to let Dick see how he does things. Had Hell-fire soup and the old regular beans and dish-water. The Frenchman has 4 kinds of soup which he furnishes to customers only on great occasions. They are popularly known among the boarders as 'Hell-fire, General Debility, Insanity and Sudden Death.'" On February 6, he writes the skeleton of a future story plot, but which evidently was never used:

> Man in San Francisco jumped lot and built house on it; propped on low pins. Hogs used to congregate under it and grunt all night. Man bored holes in the floor and his wife poured hot water through, hogs struggling to get out hauled the house down the hill on their backs and the lot was rejumped by its proper owner early in the morning.

These notes written while Clemens was at Angels, illustrate Clemens enjoyment and appreciation of the art of exaggeration, the blood and murder vocabulary resorted to by the miners in order to make rough and sordid conditions bearable.

It was not until he returned to Jackass Hill in the latter part of February, that the impact of the Jumping Frog struck Twain. To while away the dreary wet winter days, in the little cabin on that famous Hill, the two Gillis brothers, Dick Stoker and Mark Twain resorted to horseplay, cards

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and mock trials to pass the time. For several days the cabin was turned into a courtroom for the purpose of determining the competence and sanity or insanity of its occupants and neighbors. Twain enjoyed the proceedings immensely until he became the object of the proceedings and defendant before the bar. Finally his turn before the "court" came. The "court" was asked to commit one Sam Clemens to the hospital for the insane.[60] The complaint charged (February 13, 1865) that "he has a mania for story writing ... he insists on reading outloud from his manuscript ... The Jumping Frog of Calaveras; and that he murmurs about 'copyrights and royalties.'" The complaint further charges: "that which will forever bar him from the busy walks of life" is the fact that he once was a Mississippi River packet pilot and insists on recounting his heroic record as such. This humorous proceeding enraged Twain to such an extent that he left the cabin for San Francisco in a huff. As Gillis writes, Mark Twain loved a joke, but not when the fun was at his expense.

The frog story was told to Twain by Ben (or Ross) Coon, bartender at the Angels Hotel. It was given the local setting. Its characters were Angels Camp residents. There

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60. William Gillis, Gold rush days with Mark Twain. Gillis says the events took place in 1865. Mark Twain's diary, 72-76, says 1864.

is almost conclusive evidence that the story originated in Athens over two thousand years ago and later was brought to America where it became a favorite story of the Arkansas negroes. It was spread around the Middle West by a circus clown.[61] Later it reached San Andreas, Calaveras County, where the versatile editor of the San Andreas Independent wrote it as a local happening, and the new version of it became very popular along the Mother Lode. Mark Twain added to and made changes in the story related by Coon. In the first version, started while he was still at Jackass Hill and later polished up in San Francisco, Clemens changed the names of the characters used by Coon.[62]

As the latter told the story, a confirmed wagerer, a man named Coleman owned a jumping frog called Dan'l Webster,[63] which was offered to jump for dust or money (some accounts say $40, others $50) against any and all frogs. For a long time the challenge was not taken up. Finally a New York Bowery boy, Pete Stag, wistfully said, "I'd bet, if I only had a frog."[64] Coleman, finding that the New Yorker refused to go out and catch himself a frog, volunteered to do it for

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61. Samuel Clemens, Defense of Harriet Shelley ... 100-103; Fremont Older, "The famous Jumping Frog story," Overland monthly, LXXXVII, 101, April 1929.
62. Stellman, Mother Lode, 84.
63. Sometimes called "Sam" - Stellman, Ibid., 67.
64. Buckbee, Pioneer days of Angels Camp, 21.

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64. Buckbee, Pioneer days of Angels Camp, 81.

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Mark Twain's first draft of the story, finished in San Francisco, he sent East where in November 1865 it was published in the last issue of the New York Saturday Press.[65] It was again altered in the later editions. In the first edition[66] the gambler is called "Rev. Leonidas W. Greeley -

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a young minister of the gospel .... the curiosest man" who would bet on anything. Stag, the New York Bowery boy was merely "a feller - a stranger in camp." In later versions Rev. Greeley became Rev. Leonidas Smiley and finally only plain Jim Smiley. The New Yorker, Stag, continued as the stranger, the frog as Dan'l Webster. The story gave Clemens a national reputation and his succeeding western stories caused him to be placed on a par with the famous Artemus Ward.

As for Angels, the frog story gave Angels Camp, "wider fame .... than has the gold from its diggings."[67] The residents of Angels, proud of their early camp wits and alive to the publicity value of the frog story, each year in May, celebrate a Frog Jumping Jubilee. The men, for weeks in advance, permit their hair and whiskers to grow. Men and women attempt to dress as in the days of '49. The friendly little village, which nestles between the hills bordering Angels Creek, is decorated false-fronted and for a day attempts to reproduce for its guests the physical as well as psychological atmosphere of the days of gold and pioneer humor. Toy frogs, advertised as perfect replicas of Dan'l Webster appear in the store

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67. Glasscock, A golden highway, 272.

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An actual jumping contest is held to determine which is the longest jumping frog in the world. The frog field meet is staged in front of the old Angels Hotel. Frogs from widely separated sections of the country are carefully examined by judges, chosen for their impeccable reputation for honesty, in order to prevent the loading of a competing frog with buckshot. The owner of the prize-winning frog receives $500. As many as 75,000 people have crowded the narrow confines of Angels on Frog Jumping Day. Much of the old spirit is manifested in the naming of the frogs. "Budwiser" may be next to "Barney Google"; "Rock" and "Rye" perhaps flank "Leaping Lena"; decorous "Harriet" perhaps finds herself next to "Hangdog"; "Baby Mine" paired up with "Siss Mulberry."

The publication of the Jumping Frog story was of no immediate consequence nor of great interest to the miners of Angels. To them it was an old story. It had been told and retold in all the camps and published in San Andreas as early as 1849.

The hoax of the Calaveras Skull on the other hand originated and resulted from the genius of local talent. Expanded and fed by the controversy raging between theologians and Darwinians, it became a topic of world-wide

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interest and discussion. Professors and scientific expeditions came to Angels, geologized and searched for anthropological remains. These savants with earnest seriousness, interviewed the apparently equally serious-minded jokesters of Angels, Altaville and Murphys. Claims and counter claims were further purposely interjected by others wishing to get into the joke. This continued from 1866 well into the twentieth century.

The French scientists were the first to become disillusioned. This came about partially by the last stanza of Bret Harte's poem To the Pliocene Skull, in which he accepts the version that the bones were those of an unfortunate Missouri miner who had lost his life in a cave-in of the Bald Hill shaft just north of Altaville.[68]

While working the shaft in 1866, James Mattison (variously referred to as Matson, Madsen, Madison and even Mathewson) came across a skull and took it home. He later gave it to John Scribner, the Wells Fargo agent at Angels.[69] This was not unusual, as from time to time, the Wells Fargo office was the recipient of Indian relics and Calaveras cave skulls. In 1854 between thirty and forty skulls were excavated from Dead Man Spring in Salt Spring Valley, twelve miles

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69. Holmes, Review of evidence relating to auriferous gravel man in California, 461.

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59. Holmes, *Review of evidence relating to auriferous gravel man in California*, 461.

west of Angels. Several people had specimens of these skulls.[70] Scribner's partner, or assistant, Henry Mathews often suffered from the over indulgence in liquor, and occasionally consulted Dr. William Jones of Murphys. On one of these visits Mathews accused the doctor of prescribing medicine so potent that its action was effective and continuous for several days. Mathews swore he would be revenged on that "d-d outcast of a doctor ...."[71]

He decided that "the ... remains of a skull with some half-rotted and half-petrified pieces of wood and a few lumps of native ore might do to embellish Dr. Jones' cabinet of geological and natural history curiosities." The specimen was dumped into a potato sack, without note, label or the name of the contributor, and expressed to Dr. Jones. Jones, however, refused to become the object of a practical joke. He passed the skull on to the State Geologist, Dr. Whitney.[72] Dr. Whitney received the skull on June 29, 1866. After an examination of the cranium and the accompanying matrix, he donated the exhibit to the California Academy of Science on July 16, 1866.

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70. Sinclair, Recent investigations bearing on the question of the occurrence of Miocene man in the auriferous gravels of the Sierra Nevada, 128.
71. Holmes, Review of evidence relating to auriferous gravel man in California.
72. Whitney, Auriferous gravels of the Sierra Nevada of California, 267.

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There were a few gold region men interested in genuine scientific investigation who wished to debunk the hoax. Of these Dr. A. S. Hudson of Stockton and Dr. John Walker of Sonora, doctors of medicine, were the most active. Dr. Hudson, who knew miners and appreciated to what lengths a Ross Coon or a John Scribner would carry the ridiculous, made first hand investigation in and around Angels. He states that the skull was found in Salt Spring Valley and not in the mine shaft and consequently was not buried during the geological period which deposited the Tertiary auriferous gravel. "No one" says Hudson, "about the diggings supposed otherwise. ... The aim of it was not to deride native anthropological study ... but a trick ... in a spirit of humorous hilarity, by Mathews, Scribner's partner in business."[73]

Bret Harte, like Mark Twain, spent several years in the diggings south of the Stanislaus River in Tuolumne County.[74] He arrived four years before Mark Twain. He taught school in Tuttletown, acted as shotgun guard for a couple of months on the stage, which ran between Sonora and Lancha Plana, and contributed to the local press. He visited the diggings on either side of the Stanislaus, played poker

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in the bars, listened to the tall stories and witnessed the horseplay of the miners who were seeking surcease from grinding toil, homesickness and the absence of feminine society. That he enjoyed and remembered not only the stories, but the style of exaggeration raised to the point of the ridiculous, we know, because poems and stories flowed from his pen in the succeeding years.

The Luck of Roaring Camp describes a mining camp on the Stanislaus River east of Melones. The setting is a purely imaginary place and does not directly mention Angels. However, it is a fine picture of the boisterous times and it helps us to visualize Angels of the sixties. The Lonely Ride pictures a stage ride from Wingdam (Murphys) through Angels Camp to Slumgullion some seven or eight miles south. It is a description illustrating the discomforts of stagecoach travel and the rapacity of the Mother Lode innkeepers. The scene for Mrs. Skragg's Husband is laid in Angels. This story presents a representative early stage driver, superior and supercilious, who assumed a high and mighty attitude even towards "Assemblymen and Judges."

Harte's poem To the Pliocene Skull should have been a warning to the scientists that they were the victims of a clever hoax. With mock reverence, Harte takes us back to the ages which can be counted, not in years, but only in periods; back to where neither "bird or insect" existed.

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Then, when the reader's mind had properly pictured the eons of elapsed time, the geological and zoölogical transformations which have since taken place, he cruelly shatters the spell by calling upon "The awful vestige of the earth's creation," the skull, to "speak" and the spirit of the supposed Pliocene skull proceeds to do just that: "Which my name was Bowers, and my crust was busted falling down a shaft in Calaveras County. But I'd take it kindly if you'd send the pieces Home to old Missouri." Bret Harte shaped a poem which will be read and laughed about for generations.

Between the years 1865 and 1900 Angels Camp did not radically change. Mining production ebbed and flowed. The population rose and fell in sympathy with the mining curve. There were times when Angels Camp housed less than 400 people. Perhaps for those years the camp, which in 1845 had over 4,000 inhabitants, averaged less than 900 people. Roads leading to and from Angels were improved; stage and freight service became swifter and finally a railroad was built, via Jamestown to Stockton.[75] Angels remained, in a manner of speaking, isolated, and refused to take on the form or air of ultra modernism of the coast and valley towns. Large stamp mills were established which reduced the ore, not

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Populous, booming camps, which at one time outnumbered Angels, almost disappeared from the map. Their uncared-for buildings crumbled and the towns one by one, joined the long list of California ghost towns. Angels lived on. It still does. After 1900, the advent of the automobile demanded good roads. Concrete highways brought the truck with fast and cheap freight service. The auto and its general ownership permitted the Angeleno to visit and contact more frequently places outside the Mother Lode. Modern transportation also brought the outside world to Angels. Filling stations, hamburger stands and cold drink dispensaries were built or housed in the venerable buildings. The old town took on a new dress and partially, new occupations. Citizens of California revived their interest in the State's early history. The Angels Chamber of Commerce and the town's pioneer societies coöperated with other old camps of the gold region, to perpetuate the history and to preserve the old landmarks of the gold period. The State of California, through the interest and activities

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of the California State Chamber of Commerce, established as landmarks the historic sites and put up markers to designate locations of interest. After the devaluation of the dollar, the enhanced value of gold revived mining. Today, Henry Angels' old camp again numbers over one thousand people.

The ordinarily friendly Angels Creek went on a rampage, January 1, 1909 and tore through the narrow canyon, causing much havoc to old and new buildings. Bridges, business houses, dwellings and Chinese shacks were swept down the stream. The old carriage house built by Michael Cosgrave, in which had been collected many relics of pioneer days, was carried away. The structure housed old saddles, team bells, stovepipe hats, trunks, chests, pioneer mining equipment, newspapers and manuscripts written by Argonauts, who came over the plains and by those who came around the Horn or crossed Panama.[76] This was a tragic loss. However, Angels preserves what is left. The owners of the remaining buildings, keep them in repair and in a state, as far as possible, to maintain their original appearance. At this late day you can drive along Main Street and see the very stones cut and laid by Allen Taylor,

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The descendants of the old miners, long before a plaque (Landmark 287) was placed to commemorate the historical importance of the pioneer days, provided an appropriate replica of the earliest mining machinery. Some years ago the citizens built on the creek, a reproduction of one of the first under-shot wheels which furnished the power to operate the Mexican arrastres, introduced in 1851 to crush the gold-bearing quartz rock. Angels' yearly Jubilee, is not celebrated exclusively in honor of the Jumping Frog, although pioneer humor does receive the major emphasis on that day. By dress, by decoration and parade its people attempt to faithfully portray the spirit, pattern and color of the diggings.

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